

SAFE USE OF MECHANICAL & HYDRAULIC CABLE REEL JACKS

Applies to: Mechanical screw jacks, hydraulic cable jacks, reel jack stands, and drum lifting systems

Purpose

Cable reel jacks are designed to safely lift and support cable drums so they can rotate freely for controlled payout.

Used in electrical installation, utilities, construction, and industrial settings, they allow cable to be unreeled without manual lifting or dragging.

This leaflet provides safe-use guidance to prevent tipping, spindle failure, uncontrolled reel spin, and personal injury.

Before Use

- Inspect both jack stands – Check frames, bases, screws/threads, hydraulic rams, handles, and locking collars for cracks, bends, corrosion, or leaks.
- Verify SWL – Ensure the combined capacity of both jacks exceeds the full reel weight.
- Inspect spindle/bar – Check for bending, cracks, missing end cones, or worn edges.
- Check drum condition – Ensure drum flanges are intact, not rotten, split, or severely damaged.
- Floor condition – Must be level, firm, and free from debris to prevent jack tilting.
- Check mechanical threads – Ensure screw threads are clean, lubricated, and unobstructed.
- Check hydraulic units – For hydraulic jacks, inspect seals and test pump movement smoothly.
- Confirm jack height – Ensure jacks can raise drum high enough for free rotation.
- Confirm spindle engagement – Spindle length must exceed drum width and fit securely into jack axles/slots.
- Test-run – Raise each jack slightly without load to confirm stability.
- Ensure operator competence – Only trained personnel should use reel lifting equipment.

During Operation

- Position jacks one on each side of the drum, perpendicular to spindle axis.
- Roll drum into place using proper handling techniques — never lift manually.
- Insert spindle through the drum core, ensuring correct alignment and fit.
- Seat spindle ends securely into jack slots or bearings.
- Raise both jacks **evenly**, one side at a time, to keep the drum level.
- Lift only enough for the drum to rotate freely — avoid excessive height.
- Use brake bars or friction controls (if fitted) to regulate payout speed.
- Maintain a controlled feed — do not allow the drum to overspin.
- Keep hands clear of the spindle, drum edges, and rotating surfaces.
- Maintain exclusion zones around rotating drums.
- Stop operation immediately if any wobbling, spindle bowing, or jack lean occurs.

Do Not

- Exceed the rated SWL of jacks or spindle.
- Lift drums with rotten, broken, or missing flanges.
- Use jacks on soft, sloped, or unstable ground.
- Position spindle incorrectly or off-centre.
- Allow the drum to free-run — uncontrolled spin can cause serious injury.

- Stand in line with the spindle during lifting.
- Use damaged hydraulic rams or seized mechanical screws.
- Leave a raised drum unattended.
- Use makeshift bars, scaffold poles, or un-rated pipes as spindles.

After Use

- Stop cable payout and ensure drum is stable before lowering.
- Lower both jacks **slowly and evenly** until the drum rests firmly on the ground.
- Remove spindle safely and store away from traffic areas.
- Clean threads, ram rods, and spindle ends of dirt and debris.
- Inspect for wear, cracking, bent components, or leaking hydraulics.
- Lubricate screw threads and mechanical parts if required.
- Store jacks in a dry, secure area.
- Tag out defective equipment and maintain PUWER/LOLER inspection records as applicable.

Safety Reminders

- Always lift with two jacks — never try to raise a drum on one side only.
- Keep the drum level at all times.
- Never exceed capacity or use damaged spindles.
- Control payout — drums can accelerate rapidly if allowed to free-run.
- Use correct PPE: gloves, boots, hi-vis, and helmet.
- Only trained personnel should set up and operate reel jacks.
- Always conduct full pre-use inspections before beginning work.

Support and Maintenance

For service, inspection, and spare parts, contact your local Lifting Gear and Safety Depot

Depot List

Bristol: 0117 9714883
Avonmouth: 0117 9550456
Newport: 01633 334450
Port Talbot: 01639 540007
Pembroke: 01646 574000
Plymouth: 01752 474488
Fareham: 01329 550988
Redruth: 01209 703990